

**House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats
Statement of Chairman Elton Gallegly**

Markup of H. Res. 326

June 21, 2005

Today, the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats is marking up three resolutions. Two are related to upcoming parliamentary elections in Europe and the third is to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Solidarity.

The first item on the agenda is H. Res. 326, a resolution I introduced calling on the Government of Azerbaijan to ensure that their upcoming parliamentary elections are peaceful, free and fair.

In the most recent elections in that country, the 2003 presidential elections, international election observers found that they fell short of international standards, including numerous instances of voting fraud, restrictions on political rallies and intimidation against political opponents.

Since the presidential election, Azerbaijan has taken a number of steps by releasing some political prisoners and opening up their airwaves to opposing viewpoints.

I urge the Government of Azerbaijan to build on this progress and conduct elections that are fair, and free of fraud or intimidation. In addition, as stated in the resolution, I call upon both pro and anti-government political parties to fully and peacefully participate in the parliamentary elections.

The United States and Azerbaijan have enjoyed a strong relationship since Azerbaijan gained independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991. Azerbaijan has also made improvements in its election procedures since 2003. However, it is important that progress continues to be made and that the November parliamentary elections are viewed both in Azerbaijan and abroad as free and fair.

My office has worked closely with the Rep. Chris Smith's office, Mr. Wexler's office, the Helsinki Commission and the State Department in the drafting of this resolution.

I will be offering a technical amendment to H. Res. 326. However, I first want to recognize Congressman Wexler for a statement.